

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

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AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1435

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, WB

SUBJECT: CRISIS IN BERLIN GOVERNMENT OVER TERRORISTS' ESCAPE

--MAYOR OXFORT RESIGNS

REFS: A) USBERLIN 1415 B) USBERLN 1399

1. SUMMARY: SENATOR FOR JUSTICE AND MAYOR OF BERLIN
HERMANN OXFORT HAS RESIGNED IN WAKE OF ESCAPE BY FOUR
TERRORISTS FROM BERLIN PRISON. SENATO LUEDER HAS BEEN
DESIGNATED AS HIS ULTIMATE REPLACEMENT AS MAYOR;
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TUEBINGEN LAW PROFESSOR JUERGEN BAUMANN HAS BEEN ASKED TO

TAKE OVER SENATOR FOR JUSTICE POSITION. CONFUSION REIGNS AT SCHOENEBOURG RATHAUS AS CDU CONSIDERS WHETHER TO PRESS ITS ADVANTAGE AND GOV. MAYOR IMPATIENTLY WANTS TO GET AWAY ON LEAVE.

2. FACED WITH MOUNTING PRESSURES FROM THE OPPOSITION CDU AS WELL AS FROM WITHIN THE BERLIN COALITION THAT HE DRAW THE INEVITABLE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FROM TERRORISTS' ESCAPE, BERLIN BUERGERMEISTER AND JUSTICE SENATOR HERMANN OXFORT(FDP) RESIGNED HIS TWO OFFICES JULY 10. HE WILL RETAIN HIS BERLIN HOUSE SEAT, HOWEVER. REPLACING OXFORT AS BUERGERMEISTER OF BERLIN, THE NUMBER TWO RANKING ELECTED POSITION IN THE CITY, WILL BE FDP LAND CHAIRMAN WOLFGANG LUEDER, WHO PRESENTLY HOLDS THE ECONOMICS PORTFOLIO IN THE SPD/FDP COALITION GOVERNMENT. NAMED BY THE FDP TO BE THE NEW SENATOR FOR JUSTICE IS LEGAL EXPERT PROFESSOR JUERGEN BAUMANN FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TUEBINGEN. PROFESSOR BAUMANN AND LUEDER MUST BE CONFIRMED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN THEIR NEW POSITIONS(PROBABLY IN AUGUST). UNTIL THEN GOVERNING MAYOR SCHUETZ HAS DESIGNATED INTERIOR SENATOR NEUBAUER TEMPORARILY TO ASSUME OXFORTS' DUTIES AS BEURGERMEISTER AND JUSTICE SENATOR.

3. OXFORT'S RESIGNATION BECAME VIRTUAL CERTAINTY JULY 9 FOLLOWING HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE SPECIAL SESSION OF HOUSE JUSTICE COMMITTEE, WHICH REPORTEDLY WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH HIS HANDLING OF QUESTIONS RELATED TO TERRORISTS' ESCAPE AND ADMINISTRATION OF BERLIN PRISON SYSTEM. EMERGING FROM THAT MEETING OXFORT WAS QUOTED AS DENYING HE HAD REFUSED TO QUIT; HE HAD MERELY NOT EXPRESSED HIMSELF YET ON THE SUBJECT. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, OXFORT'S DECISION TO RESIGN WAS FORCED NOT SO MUCH BY THE OPPOSITION CDU'S DEMAND FOR HIM TO ASSUME PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ESCAPE OF THE FOUR TERRORISTS, AS BY FACT THAT NUMBER OF SPD DEPUTIES FROM THE PARTY'S RIGHT-WING MADE IT KNOWN THAT WERE CDU TO INTRODUCE MOTION OF NO-CONFIDENCE AGAINST OXFORT, THEIR SUPPORT FOR HIM COULD NOT BE ASSUMED. SOME OF SPD RIGHT-WINGERS REPORTEDLY ARE EVEN CALLING FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF COALITION WITH FDP AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY GRAND

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COALITION WITH THE CDU. THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT FDP BOTH LOCALLY AND IN BONN PRESSED FOR OXFORT'S EARLY REMOVAL IN HOPE THAT HIS POLITICAL SACRIFICE WOULD MINIMIZE ADVERSE EFFECT OF ESCAPE SCANDAL ON SPD/FDP COALITIONS BOTH IN BERLIN AND AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL.

4. AFTER HIS SHORT RESIGNATION LETTER WAS ACCEPTED BY GOVERNING MAYOR SCHUETZ, A SADDENED AND SOMEWHAT EMBIT-

TERED OXFORT APPEARED BEFORE THE PRESS TO EXPLAIN HIS ACTION. DESCRIBING THE TERRORISTS' ESCAPE AS POLITICALLY MEANINGFUL EVENT WHICH REQUIRED POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, OXFORT WENT ON TO SAY HE DID NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF PERSONALLY AT FAULT. HE HAD INHERITED A HOPELESSLY INADEQUATE SECURITY SITUATION AT THE LEHRTENSTRASSE WOMEN'S PRISON, WHICH HE HAD TRIED TO AMELIORATE. PRISON WAS TOO ANTIQUATED TO BE MADE ESCAPE PROOF BY MODERN STANDARDS. OXFORT EMPHASIZED IT HAD BEEN CLEAR TO HIM FROM MOMENT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF ESCAPE EXACTLY WHAT THIS EVENT MEANT WITH RESPECT TO THE ENTEBBE HIJACKING, THE SECURITY THREAT REPRESENTED BY THE ESCAPED TERRORISTS, AND THE FORTHCOMING NATIONAL ELECTION.

5. IN ACCEPTING OXFORT'S RESIGNATION, GOVERNING MAYOR SCHEUTZ SAID HE RESPECTED OXFORT'S DECISION, BUT ADDED "EVERYONE KNOWS THAT OXFORT BEARS NO PERSONAL GUILT FOR THE TERRORISTS' ESCAPE". ALTHOUGH ABSOLVING OXFORT FROM PERSONAL CULPABILITY, SCHUETZ DESCRIBED CONDITIONS AT LEHRTERSTRASSE PRISON REPORTED IN THE BERLIN ATTORNEY-GENERALS AS YET UNCOMPLETED INVESTIGATION AS UNJUSTIFIABLE AND DISMAYING. HE VOWED THE SITUATION WOULD BE CORRECTED AT ONCE.

6. IN JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED JULY 10 FDP CHAIRMAN LUEDER AND FDP ACTING CAUCUS CHAIRMAN DITTBERNER ALSO DECLARED THAT OXFORT HAD ASSUMED POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVENTS FOR WHICH HE BORE NO PERSONAL BLAME. BY HIS ACTIONS, OXFORT PROVED THAT HE APPLIED TO HIMSELF THE SAME HIGH STANDARD OF DEMOCRATIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHICH HE HAD FOUGHT IN HIS POLITICAL CAREER. ACTING CDU LEADER KARL HEINZ SCHMITZ REACTED TO OXFORT'S RESIGNATION BY TERMING IT THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE SCANDALOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENTS AT THE WOMEN'S PRISON. THE CDU, SCHMITZ, SAID VIEWED RESIGNATION AS ACT OF DEMOCRATIC SELF-PURIFICATION INVOLVING ASSUMPTION OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT ADMISSION OF POLITICAL GUILT.

7. COMMENT: THE SENATE SURVIVAL ON SATURDAY OF ITS MID-SUMMER CRISIS IS SO FAR ONLY BARELY COMFORTABLE. OXFORT'S RESIGNATION OCCURRED ON ABOUT THE LAST DAY WHEN IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITH SOME DEGREE OF HONOR, EVEN SO, EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE TIMING WAS DETERMINED OUTSIDE BERLIN RATHER THAN BY THE SOMNOLENT LOCAL COALITION, WHICH FIRST TRIED TO SIGNAL TO THE PUBLIC THAT OXFORT WOULD STAY IN ORDER TO TAKE OVER SCHUETZ' FUNCTIONS WHEN THE LATTER DISAPPEARED ON HIS PROLONGED

SUMMER VACATION, WHICH HE HAD DELAYED FOR 48 HOURS OUT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SENSE OF DUTY. OXFORD DID IN FACT GET OUT WITH DIGNITY, BUT ONLY BY THE DEVICE OF PRESENTING SELECTIVE FACTS ABOUT CASE. NUMEROUS, HERETOFORE UNPUBLISHED FAILURES AND DEFICIENCIES THAT THE PRISON ARE NOW INEVITABLY BEING REVEALED BY THE PRESS. THEY WILL ADD TO THE OVERWHELMING IMPRESSION THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE BEING ACCOMMODATED IN DILAPIDATED QUARTERS WITH NEGLIGENT SUPERVISION, AND THAT THE SENATE REALLY DID NOT CARE THAT THIS WAS HAPPENING. THE MISSION HAS LEARNED A NUMBER OF VERY DAMAGING FACTS ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION IN ADDITION TO THOSE WHICH HAVE ALREADY LEAKED TO THE PRESS. WE HOPE SOON TO ASSEMBLE A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF THE ESCAPE, BUT IN FAIRNESS TO OXFORD WE SHOULD NOT THAT SOME SHORTCOMINGS APPARENTLY WERE OF A NATURE THAT WOULD HAVE ESCAPED EVEN SOPHISTICATED INSPECTIONS, I.E. PERSONAL FAILURES OF CARELESS STAFF AS WELL AS TEMPORARY SHORT STAFFING.

8. AFTER THE KPM, BURGER-NICKEL SPY AND STEGLITZ KREISEL SCANDALS, MAYOR SCHUETZ MUST BE WONDERING WHEN IF EVER HE WILL BE PLEASED WITH FRONT PAGE NEWS FAVORABLE TO THE COALITION. THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN RIGHT AWAY. BERLIN HAS DRASTICALLY LOST FACE ON A NATIONAL BASIS, E.G. , SARCASTIC REMARK CREDITED TO FDP MINISTER FRIEDERICH that AFTER ENTENBE, BERLIN WAS ONLY "RECYCLING" THE TERRORISTS, LOCALLY THE CDU WILL BORE IN ON SCHUETZ
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AND THE SPD, WHERE EXPOSURE WILL BE AT A MAXIMUM FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. FACT THAT CONSERVATIVE WING OF LOCAL SPD MAKING BEHIND THE SCENE NOISES ABOUT BREAKING

COALITION RANKS WILL ONLY ADD TO GOV MAYOR'S HEADACHES. IN FACE OF CONTINUED UNSETTLED POLITICAL SITUATION, GOV MAYOR SCHUETZ HAS PUT OFF HIS DEPARTURE FOR VACATION AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER HE CAN ASSESS THE RESULTS OF OPPOSITION CDU FRAKTION MEETING AND FURTHER MEETING OF SENATE BOTH OF WHICH SCHEDULED FOR LATE MORNING JULY 13.
GEORGE

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